

F B I

Date: 8/15/69

Transmit the following in PLAINTEXT  
(Type in plaintext or code)Via TELETYPE DEFERRED  
(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR

FROM: JACKSON (157-NEW) (P)

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISS., EIGHT FIFTEEN, SIXTY-NINE, RM, OO: JACKSON.

JOSEPH SMITH, PRESIDENT, HOLMES CO., MISS., NAACP,  
ADVISED THIS A.M. THAT CAPTIONED SCHOOL EXTENSIVELY DESTROYED  
BY FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN THIS A.M.; SAID THOUGHT FIRE HAD  
POSSIBLE RACIAL OVERTONES BUT COULD PROVIDE NO SPECIFICS TO  
SUPPORT THIS STATEMENT.

DEPUTY SHERIFF W. O. MOORE, HOLMES CO. SO, WHO  
RESIDES TCHULA, ADVISED ON SCENE TODAY THAT FIRE IN TWENTY-  
FIVE YEAR OLD BRICK FRAME SCHOOL BUILDING OCCURRED ABOUT  
FOUR FORTY-FIVE A.M. THIS MORNING; FIRE REPORTED BY WHITE MALE  
RESIDENT WHO LIVES IN PREDOMINATELY WHITE AREA NEAR SCHOOL;  
FIRE TRUCK APPEARED ON SCENE SHORTLY AFTER FIRE REPORTED,  
HOWEVER, BUILDING APPARENTLY A TOTAL LOSS; CAUSE OF FIRE  
UNKNOWN AND APPEARED TO CENTER IN INTERIOR OF BUILDING;

① Jackson  
TF/jrs (1)

DO NOT DESTROY -  
PENDING LITIGATION

Approved: RKM

Special Agent in Charge

Sent

WA 1:52 PM

Anderson QAL T-

Searched ll  
Serialized cl  
Referred pgl  
Filed cl  
8/18/69

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plaintext or code)Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority)

PAGE TWO

NO ONE IN SCHOOL DURING BURNING AND NO INJURIES SUFFERED; SCHOOL JANITOR LEFT BUILDING FOUR P.M. EIGHT FOURTEEN, LAST. NO EVIDENCE OF ARSON DISCOVERED AND STATE FIRE MARSHAL <sup>ENROUTE</sup> ~~IN ROUTE~~ TO THE SCENE TO CONDUCT APPROPRIATE INVESTIGATION.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTIGATION NEGATIVE; PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN OF BUILDING.

MRS. SUSIE B. PENNINGTON, N/F, PRINCIPAL OF CAPTIONED SCHOOL, WHO RESIDES GREENWOOD, MISS., ADVISED HAS BEEN PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL FOR THREE YEARS; SCHOOL IS <sup>COUNTY FUNDED</sup> ALL NEGRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WITH GRADES ONE THROUGH EIGHT AND NO CLASSES HAVE BEEN IN SESSION THIS SUMMER; TO HER KNOWLEDGE SCHOOL WAS TO REOPEN IN SEPTEMBER NEXT AND NO INTEGRATION OF SCHOOL PLANNED. SHE IS NOT AWARE OF ANY THREATS OR DIFFICULTIES OF RACIAL NATURE EXPERIENCED BY THE SCHOOL DURING HER THREE YEAR TENURE AS PRINCIPAL; CAUSE OF FIRE UNKNOWN TO HER, HOWEVER, SHE NOTES SCHOOL BUILDING IS QUITE OLD; SHE WAS LAST IN BUILDING THREE P.M. EIGHT FOURTEEN, LAST.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plaintext or code)Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority)

PAGE THREE

TCHULA, MISS., IS A SMALL TOWN OF ABOUT EIGHTEEN HUNDRED RESIDENTS IN A RURAL AREA ABOUT SEVENTY-FIVE MILES NORTH OF JACKSON IN MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION; TCHULA AREA HAS HIGH NEGRO POPULATION.

APPROPRIATE LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES ADVISED.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

JACKSON CONTINUING PRELIMINARY INQUIRY REGARDING  
MATTER AND LHM FOLLOWS. END.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
(Title) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

(File No.) 157-11232-1A

1. <sup>and negatives</sup> 8/21/69, Photos of damage at Tchula Elementary School, taken 8/69.

2. *check*

Disposition.

157-11232-1A

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
AUG 21 1969	
FBI — JACKSON	

File No. 157-11232-1A1Date Received 8-30-69

From \_\_\_\_\_

(NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR)

(ADDRESS OF CONTRIBUTOR)

(CITY AND STATE)

By Anderson

(NAME OF SPECIAL AGENT)

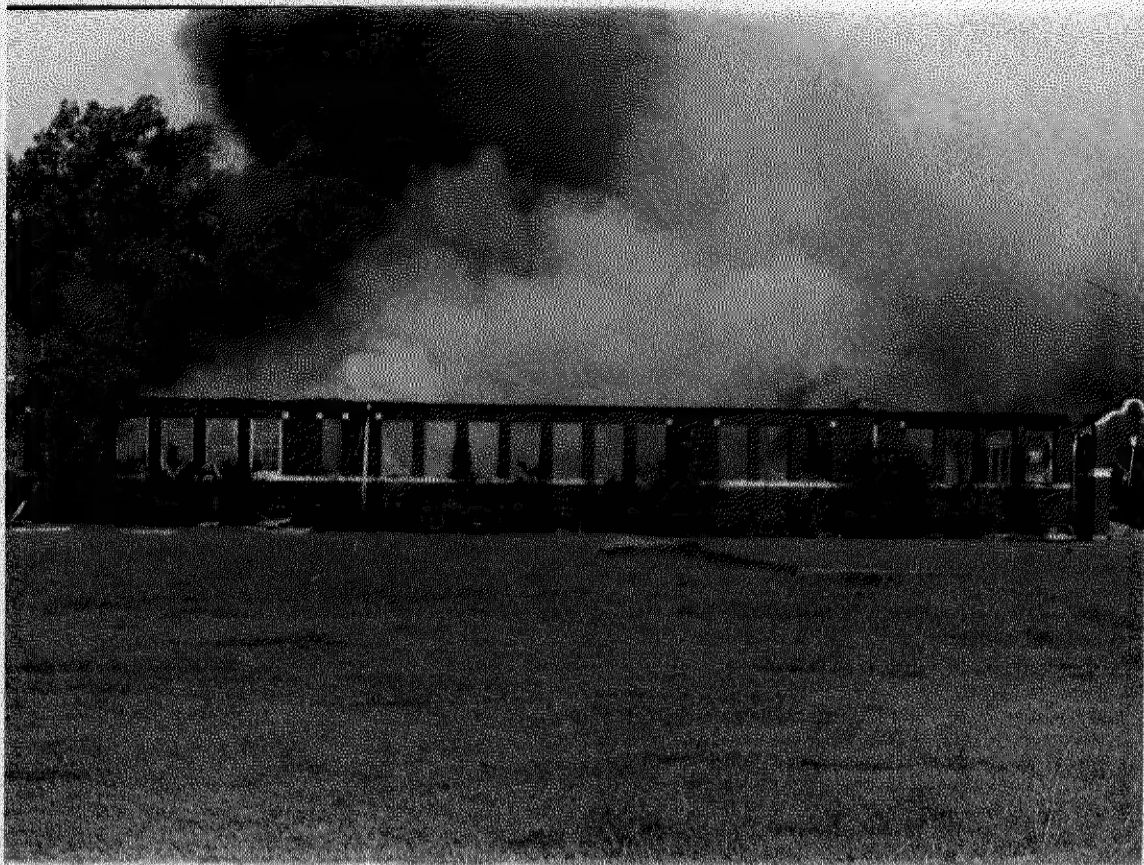
To Be Returned ☐ Yes☐ NoReceipt given ☐ Yes☐ No

## Description:

*negatives*  
Photos of damage of Tchula  
elementary School, taken 8/69.

TCHULA  
CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
W. WIGWIN, CHAIRMAN.  
J. S. SHURLOFF, E. L. GORDON,  
M. HEMPHILL, PRINCIPAL.  
FRANK R. MCGEOY, ARCHITECT.  
ROY L. MOOR, ASSOCIATE.  
ESTES WINS, RAGSDALE, CO.  
BUILDERS.  
A. D. 1924

157-11232-1A1



E - SIDE

157-11232-1A1



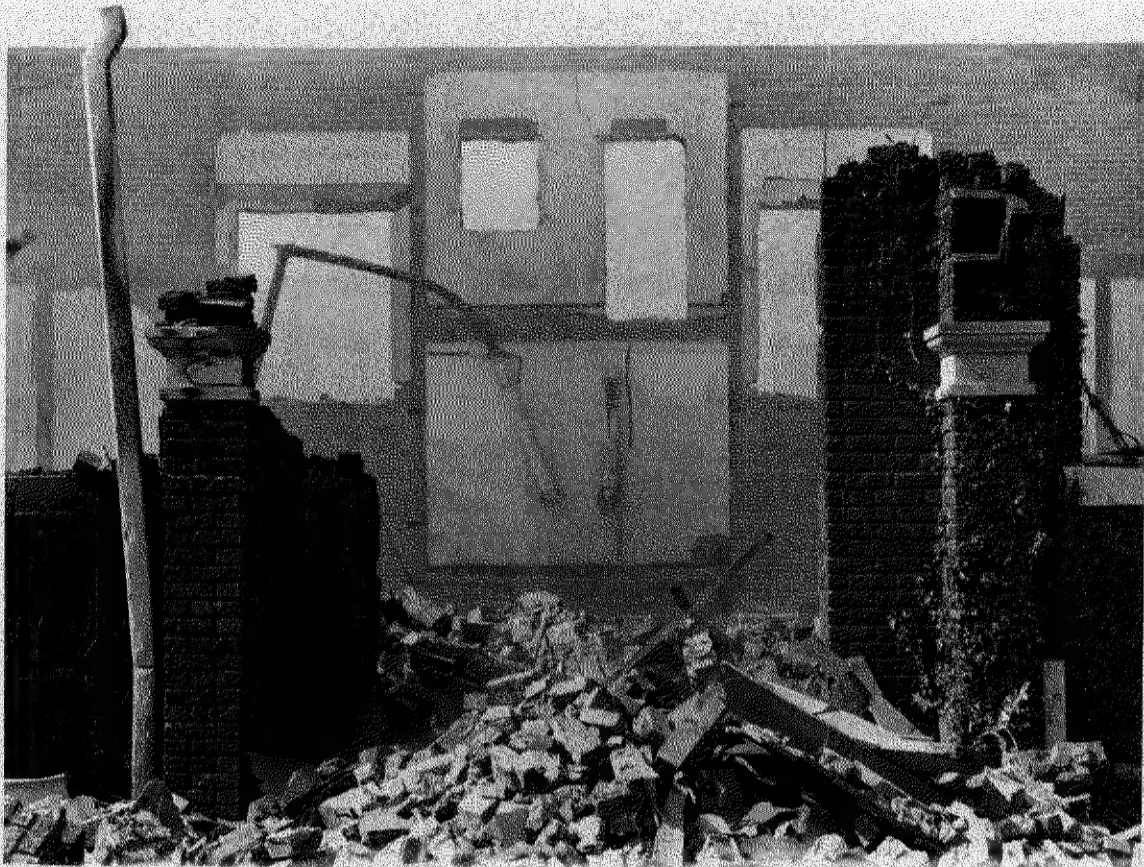
FRONT EX PRIN. OFFICE

157-11232-171



FRONT N SIDE

157-112 32-1A1



FRONT N SIDE

157-11232-1A1



N-W

157-11232-1A1



S - SIDE

157-11232-1A1



S-E CORNER

In 157-11232-1A1



FRONT N SIDE

In: 157-11232-1A1



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Jackson, Mississippi 39205

August 15, 1969

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,  
AUGUST 15, 1969

Mr. Joseph Smith, President of Holmes County, Mississippi, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Chapter, Tchula, Mississippi, telephonically contacted the Jackson, Mississippi, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Office, the morning of August 15, 1969, advising that Tchula Elementary School, Tchula, Mississippi, had burned earlier that same morning. Mr. Smith stated that he did not know the origin of the blaze and he was not making any allegation as to the cause of the fire, except for possible racial overtones to which he could provide no specific details. He said the building appeared to be a total loss.

Investigation by local authorities at the site failed to disclose the exact time of the starting of the fire or its cause. FBI and local authorities conducting neighborhood investigation determined that no one had heard any unusual noises prior to the fire and no suspicious traffic had been observed in the area.

- 11 - Bureau (RM)
- 1 - USA, Jackson
- 1 - OSI, Jackson (RM)
- 2 - MIGp, Jackson (RM)
- 2 - Jackson (157-NEW)

RAH:bal

(17)

157-11232-2  
Searched \_\_\_\_\_  
Serialized \_\_\_\_\_  
Indexed \_\_\_\_\_  
Filed \_\_\_\_\_

Anderson

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,  
AUGUST 15, 1969

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Deputy Sheriff W. O. Moore, Holmes County, Mississippi, Sheriff's Office, who lives in Tchula, said the fire in the 25-year old brick frame school building was reported about 4:30 P.M., on August 15, 1969, by a white male resident in the predominantly white neighborhood near the school. He said the school janitor left the building about 4:00 P.M., August 14, 1969, and no one was in the building when it burned and no injuries resulted. No evidences of arson have been discovered and the fire apparently was centered in the interior of the building.

Mrs. Susie B. Pennington, Negro female, who resides in Greenwood, Mississippi, and is Principal of captioned school, advised FBI Agents on August 15, 1969, that she has been Principal of Tchula Elementary School for the past three years. Mrs. Pennington further advised that the Tchula Elementary School is a county funded, all Negro school, consisting of Grades 1-8. Mrs. Pennington stated there had been no classes in the school during the past summer months, and that the activity in the school in recent days was in preparing for the starting of the school year in September, 1969. Mrs. Pennington further stated that she has noted no racial problems in the Tchula community regarding the Tchula Elementary School during her tenure as principal. To her knowledge, the school is not to be integrated in school year 1969-70.

State Fire Marshal Earl Wayne Patridge has been advised of this fire and is conducting appropriate investigation.

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,  
AUGUST 15, 1969

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Tchula, Mississippi, is a small town of 1,800 residents in a rural area 75 miles north of Jackson, Mississippi, in the Mississippi Delta region. Tchula has a high Negro population.

Appropriate local, state and Federal authorities advised.

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

3\*

FBI

Date: 8/15/69

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plaintext or code)

Via AIRTEL \_\_\_\_\_

AIRMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-NEW)

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,  
8/15/69

RM

(OO: JACKSON)

Enclosed for the Bureau are 11 copies of LHM  
dated 8/15/69, and concerning captioned matter.

One copy of LHM designated USA, Jackson, Miss.;  
2 copies of LHM designated MFGP, Jackson, and one copy  
to OSI, Jackson, Miss.

Photos of school building damage taken and being  
retained in Jackson file.

LEAD:

JACKSON DIVISION

AT TCHULA, MISSISSIPPI

Contact State Fire Marshal re results of investigation  
for any indication of arson.

2 - Bureau (Enc. 11) (RM)

2 - Jackson

PAH:bal

(4)

Searched \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved \_\_\_\_\_  
Serialized \_\_\_\_\_  
Indexed \_\_\_\_\_  
Filed \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : SAC, JACKSON (157-NEW)

DATE: 8/16/69

FROM : SA ROBERT A. HOLT

SUBJECT: BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,  
TCHULA, HOLMES COUNTY,  
MISSISSIPPI  
8/15/69  
RM  
(OO: JACKSON)

A neighborhood investigation was conducted in the vicinity of captioned school on 8/15/69, the results of which were that all interviewed stated that to their knowledge the fire was first noted at approximately 4:30 to 4:45 A.M., on 8/15/69.

All that were interviewed advised that they heard no explosion nor any unusual sounds prior to the noticing of the fire at that time.

The following individuals were contacted during the neighborhood investigation:

DALE RAY, Main Street, Tchula,  
Mississippi.

RUBE RAY, Main Street, Tchula,  
Mississippi.

CYNTHIA KOCHRAL and MARY AKINS,  
Trailer Court, Main Street,  
Tchula, Mississippi

CHARLOTTE BLACKSTOP, Main Street  
Tchula, Mississippi

2 - Jackson  
RAH:yh  
(2)



5010-108

157-11232-4

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
AUG 16 1969	
FBI - JACKSON	

*[Signature]*

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

JN 157-NEW

The following individuals were contacted and advised that they had no knowledge of any of the details of how the fire started in captioned school. These individuals stated that they knew of no racial problems that occurred in the community:

JIM ANDREWS, Constable, Tchula,  
Miss.

ROBERT P. GILLESPIE, Constable,  
Tchula, Miss.

W. O. MOORE, Chief Deputy, Holmes  
County SO, Lexington, Miss.

DANIEL PEPPER, Supervisor of  
Maintenance, Holmes County Schools,  
Lexington, Miss.

Mrs. SUSIE B. PENNINGTON, Principal,  
Tchula Elementary School, Tchula, Miss.

ALBERT CHADWICK, Janitor, Tchula  
Elementary School, Tchula, Miss.

GRADY ELLIS, Supervisor, District Two,  
Holmes County, Miss.

DUTCH FARMER, Supervisor, District One,  
Holmes County, Miss.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

*Memorandum*

TO : ALL AGENTS (157-11232)

DATE: 8/25/69

FROM : SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON

SUBJECT: BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,  
TCHULA, HOLMES COUNTY, MISS.  
8/15/69

Enclosed is a letterhead memorandum setting forth facts concerning captioned case. Authority is granted to reproduce the enclosure as needed for appropriate dissemination.

All Agents are requested to contact logical informants, sources and law enforcement agencies regarding this matter. Only positive results should be furnished to the writer. Please set forth positive results on attached routing slip..

Enc. 1

1 - 157-11232  
1 - Each Agent

AAA/pap  
(72)

157-11232-5

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
AUG 25 1969	
FBI - JACKSON	

Routing Slip

TO: SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON

FROM: SA

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,  
TCHULA, HOLMES COUNTY, MISS.  
8/15/69

   All contacts negative.

   Contact positive with the following information:

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,  
TCHULA, HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI  
AUGUST 15, 1969

Mr. Joseph Smith, President of Holmes County, Mississippi, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Chapter, Tchula, Mississippi, telephonically contacted the Jackson, Mississippi, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Office, the morning of August 15, 1969, advising that Tchula Elementary School, Tchula, Mississippi, had burned earlier that same morning. Mr. Smith stated that he did not know the origin of the blaze and he was not making any allegation as to the cause of the fire, except for possible racial overtones to which he could provide no specific details. He said the building appeared to be a total loss.

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Deputy Sheriff W. O. Moore, Holmes County, Mississippi, Sheriff's Office, who lives in Tchula, said the fire in the 25-year old brick frame school building was reported about 4:30 p.m., on August 15, 1969, by a white male resident in the predominately white neighborhood near the school. He said the school janitor left the building about 4:00 p.m., August 14, 1969, and no one was in the building when it was burned and no injuries resulted. No evidences of arson have been discovered and the fire apparently was centered in the interior of the building.

Mrs. Susie B. Pennington, Negro female, who resides in Greenwood, Mississippi, and is principal of captioned school, advised FBI Agents on August 15, 1969, that she has been principal of Tchula Elementary School for the past three years. Mrs. Pennington further advised that the Tchula Elementary School is a county funded, all Negro school, consisting of Grades 1-8. Mrs. Pennington stated there had been no classes in the school during the past summer months, and that the activity in the school in recent days was in preparing for the starting of the school year in September, 1969. Mrs. Pennington further stated that she has noted no racial problems in the Tchula community regarding the Tchula Elementary School during her tenure as principal. To her knowledge, the school is not to be integrated in school year 1969-1970.

State Fire Marshal Earl Wayne Patridge has been advised of this fire and is conducting appropriate investigation.

Tchula, Mississippi, is a small town of 1,800 residents in a rural area 75 miles north of Jackson, Mississippi, in the Mississippi Delta region. Tchula has a high Negro population.

Appropriate local, state and Federal authorities have been advised.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : SAC, JACKSON [REDACTED] (P)

DATE 8/29/69

FROM : SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON

SUBJECT [REDACTED]

FOIA b 7 D

Dates of Contact 8/29/69	
Titles and File #s on which contacted	
PUBLIC SCHOOLS OPENING FALL, 1969	173-1416
BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,	157-11232
TCHULA, HOLMES COUNTY, MISS.	
Purpose and results of contact	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEGATIVE <input type="checkbox"/> POSITIVE <input type="checkbox"/> STATISTIC	
Source advised that his new home telephone number is [REDACTED].	
Source advised that he is awaiting a Federal court decision in New Orleans regarding desegregation of Miss. schools required as of September or December 1st.	
Source advised that he and other Negroes in Holmes County feel that the bombing of the Tchula Elementary School was intentional to keep Negroes from attending that school. He further stated that the Negroes in that area have decided to attend Tchula Elementary School in tents if necessary.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.	Rating Satisfactory
Coverage Racial SERIALIZED INDEXED 11-2 1969 FBI-JACKSON Anderson	
1 - [REDACTED] 1 - 173-1416 1 - 157-11232	

AAA/pap  
(3)

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : SAC, Jackson [redacted] (P)

DATE: 8/30/69

FROM : SA, Robert Edward Lee

SUBJECT: [redacted]

FOIA b 7 D

Dates of Contact 7/26/69 - 8/22, 26/69					
Titles and File #s on which contacted 157-18 --- SAM BOWERS 157-399 --- Potential Situations Which Can develop Into Racial Situations 157-11232 --- Burning Of Tchula Negro Elementary School, Tchula, Miss. 8/15/69 157-446 WKKKKOM, Jones County, Miss.					
Purpose and results of contact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEGATIVE <input type="checkbox"/> POSITIVE  7/26/69 157-18 Source advised that he has not heard any information that might assist in determining the status of SAM BOWERS, who is still in jail at Hattiesburg, Miss.. He said there is very little talk about him.  8/22/69 157-399 Source advised that he has not heard of any information that might indicate that there was going to be trouble when the schools open this fall. He feels that the School situation in Jones County, Miss. is better than it has been in years.  8/26/69 -- 157-11232 Source states he has no information that might assist in determining who might have been responsible for the burning of the Tchula Negro Elementary <table border="1"><tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.</td><td>Rating VG</td><td>Coverage Same</td></tr></table> Personal Data Same			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.	Rating VG	Coverage Same
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.	Rating VG	Coverage Same			

REL/

157-18 (BOWERS) 157-446 (WKKKKOM, Jones Co.)  
157-399 (Potential Racial Violence)  
157-11232 (Tchula School)

157-11232-7

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
SEP 2 - 1969	
FBI - JACKSON	

*[Signature]*

at Tchula, Mississippi.

8/26/69      157-446

Source advised that he does not know of any efforts to reorganize the WKKKKOM, Jones County, Miss. He feels sure that there is no attempts to reorganize in the Ellisville, Miss. area.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

## Memorandum

TO : SAC, Jackson [REDACTED] (P)

DATE: 8/30/69

FROM : SA, Robert Edward Lee

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

FOIA b 7 D

## Dates of Contact

7/14, 31/69; 8/1, 28/69 8/26/69

## Titles and File #s on which contacted

157-399 -- Potential Situations Which Can Develop Into Racial Violence  
 157-11232 -- Burning of Tchula Negro Elem School, Tchula, Miss. 8/15/69  
 157-4109 NORMAN T. LEE  
 157- NOEL MATHEWS JR., aka "Junior"  
 157-446 WKKKKOM, Jones Co., Miss.

## Purpose and results of contact

☒ NEGATIVE  
☐ POSITIVE

7/14/69 -- 157-446

Source advised that he has not heard of any efforts to reorganize the WKKKKOM, Jones County, Miss. He feels that there are some efforts by the "die hards" to keep the conversation going but there is little else known to informant.

7/31/69 8/1/69 NORMAN T. LEE JUNIOR MATHEWS, aka "NOEL"

Source advised that he has been in contact with NORMAN T. LEE and NOEL MATHEWS, JR., aka "Junior" on recent occasions and they might mention the klan but nothing of a definite nature. LEE on one occasion made the remark that we are still in operation but will have to be real quiet until after all the trials are over in and around Jones County.

8/26/69 - Potential Situations Which Can Develop Into Racial Violence

☒ Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.

Rating  
VG

Coverage  
Same

## Personal Data

Same

REL/

157-446 (WKKKKOM, Jones Co) 157-399 (Potential  
 157-11232 (Burning Tchula Situation For Rac Vio)  
 School, 8/15/69) 157-4109 (N. LEE)  
 157- NOEL MATHEWS, JR.

157-11232-8  
SEARCHED INDEXED

SERIALIZED FILED

SEP 2 - 1969

FBI - JACKSON

Anderson 894

Source advised that he has been around several of the schools in Jones County, Miss. and has also been in touch with several former top members of the Klan and none of them indicate that there is going to be any trouble when school starts this fall.

8/28/69 --- 157-11232

On 8/28/69, source advised that he has not heard anything concerning the burning of the Tchula Negro Elementary School, Tchula, Miss., 8/15/69.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

*Memorandum*

TO : SAC • Jackson [ ] (P)

DATE: 8/30/69

FROM : SA • Robert Edward Lee [ ]

SUBJECT: [ ]

FOIA b 7 D

## Dates of Contact

8/11, 28/69

## Titles and File #s on which contacted

157-18 SAM BOWERS

157-446 WKKKKOM, Jones County, Miss.

157-399 Potential Situations Which Can Develop Into Rac Viol.

157-11232 Burning of Tchula Negro Elem School, Tchula, Miss., 8/15/69

## Purpose and results of contact

☐ NEGATIVE

☒ POSITIVE

8/11/69 - 157-18 157-446

On 8/11/69, source advised that he has not heard of any information that might indicate that anyone around Laurel, Miss. are attempting to get SAM BOWERS released on bond in Hattiesburg, Miss.

He said that he has not heard of any efforts to reorganised the WKKKKOM in Jones County, Miss.. He has been around John's Cafe several times but no one seems to be interested in talking about the Klan.

8/28/69 157-399 157-11232

Source has no information that the begining of school in Jones County this fall might have any racial violence.

He doesnot have any information that might determine the person responsible for the burning of the Tchula Negro Elem. School, Tchula, Miss. 8/15/69.

☐ Informant certified that he has furnished all information obtained by him since last contact.

Rating

G

Coverage

Same

## Personal Data

Same

157-18 (SAM BOWERS) 157-446 (WKKKKOM, Jones Co.)

157-399 (Pot Rac Vio) 157-11232 (Burning of Tchula School, Tchula, Miss. 8/15/69)

157-11232-9

SEARCHED INDEXED

FILED

SEP 2 - 1969

FBI - JACKSON

REL/

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 16, 1969

Mrs. SUSIE B. PENNINGTON, 308 Greene Street, Greenwood, Mississippi, was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agent and the purpose of the interview. Mrs. PENNINGTON furnished the following information:

Mrs. PENNINGTON advised that she has been the Principal of Tchula Elementary School for the past three years and explained that it is an all Negro elementary school ranging in grades from one through eight. Mrs. PENNINGTON explained that the school has had a Negro population for the past three years.

Pertaining to the fire which occurred at the school on August 15, 1969, Mrs. PENNINGTON explained that she had no idea how the fire could have started, that on August 14, 1969, she was at the school, but left at approximately 2:30 to 3:00 P. M. Mrs. PENNINGTON explained that her presence at the school on August 14, 1969, was due to the usual school preparation for the beginning of school in September. Mrs. PENNINGTON noted that she had received no threats or warnings regarding the fire and that there appeared to be no antagonism felt by the community toward the school itself.

On 8/15/69 at Greenwood, Mississippi

File # Jackson 157-11232-10

by SA ROBERT A. HOLT and SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON: RAH:yh

Date dictated 8/15/69

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date September 24, 1969

Investigator EARL PATRIDGE, State Fire Marshal's office, was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agent and the purpose of the interview. Mr. PATRIDGE furnished the following information:

Laboratory tests performed upon debris taken from the area believed to be the origin of the fire which occurred at Tchula Negro Elementary School, Tchula, Mississippi, on August 15, 1969, were negative. It is his opinion that the fire may have been going for a couple of hours before it was noticed. The cause of the fire is undetermined at this time.

On 9/23/69 at Winona, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-11232 //  
by SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON *aaq* /blw Date dictated 9/23/69

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Jackson, Mississippi  
September 24, 1969

BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI  
AUGUST 15, 1969

Reference is made to previous letterhead memorandum submitted in this matter dated August 15, 1969, at Jackson, Mississippi.

Several racial sources have been contacted with negative results. Investigation by state and local officials has failed to determine the cause of captioned fire.

Investigator Earl Patridge of the State Fire Marshal's office advised on September 23, 1969, that laboratory tests performed upon debris taken from the area believed to be the origin of the fire have been negative. This does not, however, rule out the possibility of the cause of the fire being arson.

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11 - Bureau (RM)  
1 - USA, Jackson  
2 - MIGP, Jackson  
1 - OSI, Jackson  
1 - Jackson (157-11232) (C)

AAA/blw

(16)

*blw*

157-11232-12

- 1\* -

Searched \_\_\_\_\_  
Serialized *of* \_\_\_\_\_  
Indexed \_\_\_\_\_  
Filed *of* \_\_\_\_\_

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM : SAC, JACKSON (157-11232) (C)

SUBJECT: BURNING OF TCHULA NEGRO  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA,  
HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,  
AUGUST 15, 1969  
RM  
(OO: JACKSON)

DATE: 9/24/69

Re Jackson airtel dated 8/15/69.

Enclosed for the Bureau are eleven copies of an LHM dated September 24, 1969, concerning captioned matter.

One copy of the LHM is being designated for the United States Attorney, Jackson, Mississippi; two copies for MIGp, Jackson; and one copy for OSI, Jackson.

Jackson is conducting no further investigation in this matter.

2 - Bureau (Enc. 11) (RM)

1 - Jackson

AAA/blw



5010-108-01

157-11232-13

Searched	_____
Serialized	_____
Indexed	_____
Filed	_____

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/15/69

Mr. COURTNEY PERRY, Main Street, Tchula, Mississippi, was advised of the identity of the interviewing agent and as to the purpose of the interview. Mr. PERRY furnished the following information:

PERRY lives on Main Street, five houses west of the Tchula Elementary School on the south side of the street. PERRY is the Postmaster at Tchula. He advised that the consensus of opinion of the white folks in that area was that the school fire was accidental. He stated he does not believe that any of his neighbors, or anyother people living around the school were hostile enough to burn the school.

On 9/11/69 at Tchula, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-11232 - 14  
by SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON/bb Date dictated 9/12/69  
*aaa*

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## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/15/69

Mr. ALBERT CHADWICK, Janitor, Tchula Elementary School, Tchula, Mississippi, was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agent, as well as the purpose of the interview. Mr. CHADWICK furnished the following information:

At the northeast corner of the building believed to be the point of origin of the fire, was a storage room which contained typewriters, overhead projector, and miscellaneous papers. He did not know of any flammable fluids being stored in this room. He further stated that he had cleaned the floors the day before the fire and only used soap and water. He further stated that he had no idea as to the cause of the fire.

On 9/11/69 at Tchula, Mississippi

File # Jackson 157-11232 -15

by SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON/bb  
*aaa*

9/12/69

Date dictated \_\_\_\_\_

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## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/15/69

Mrs. SUSIE B. PENNINGTON, 308 Green Street, Greenwood, Mississippi, was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agent and as to the purpose of the interview. Mrs. PENNINGTON furnished the following information:

Mrs. PENNINGTON advised that in the store room at the northeast corner of the building, that she knew of gym clothing being stored a case of filmstrips in a metal box and a ditto machine. These items are in addition to the items that Mr. ALBERT CHADWICK had mentioned. The ditto machine had not been used since June, 1969, and she did not know if the printing fluid had been left in it. She further stated that she did not have any idea as to the cause of the fire.

On 9/11/69 at Tchula, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-11232 - 16

by SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON/bb 9/12/69  
999 Date dictated

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

JN 157-11232

AAA/bb

1\_

The following investigation was conducted by  
SA ARNOLD A. ANDERSON; on September 11, 1969:

The following people were contacted with  
negative results regarding this matter:

Mr. JOSEPH SMITH, Tchula, Mississippi,  
President of the Holmes County National  
Association for the Advancement of  
Colored People (NAACP)

Miss ROSEBUD CLARK, a research teacher  
at the Mileston Headstart Center,  
Mileston, Mississippi

Mr. CONAL KIMBLE, Committee member of the  
Mileston Headstart Center, Mileston,  
Mississippi

157-11232-17

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
SEP 30 1969	
FBI-JACKSON	

F B I

Date: 12/30/69

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

PLAINTEXT

(Type in plaintext or code)

Via TELETYPE

DEFERRED

(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR

FROM: JACKSON (173-New) (P)

UNSUB; BURNING OF TCHULA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GYMNASIUM,  
AND AGRICULTURE BUILDING, TCHULA (HOLMES COUNTY), MISS.,  
DECEMBER THIRTY, SIXTYNINE. PE - CRA, NINETEEN SIXTYFOUR.

CONSTABLE R. P. GILLESPIE, TCHULA, MISS., ADVISED CAPTIONED  
BUILDINGS DISCOVERED BURNING FOUR FORTYFIVE A.M. DECEMBER  
THIRTY. GILLESPIE ADVISED BUILDINGS FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY BLACK  
STUDENTS, GRADES ONE THROUGH SIX, BUT WAS CLOSED EFFECTIVE  
DECEMBER TWENTYTHREE FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND NOT TO BE REOPENED.  
PUPILS WERE REASSIGNED TO OTHER SCHOOLS IN HOLMES COUNTY PER  
HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE (HEW) AND COURT INTEGRATION PLANS.  
GILLESPIE STATED THAT GAS UTILITIES DISCONNECTED AND ELECTRIC  
POWER STILL IN SERVICE. GILLESPIE SAID NO ONE INJURED AND  
AMOUNT OF DAMAGE UNKNOWN.

RAGS AND METAL CONTAINER LOCATED AT SCENE.

GILLESPIE ADVISED HE DOES NOT BELIEVE KLANSMEN AND OTHER  
SEGREGATIONIST RESPONSIBLE FOR FIRE.

**DO NOT DESTROY** - *see 157-11232-18*  
**PERIODIC COLLECTION** *Case 9-17-70*  
*Bel*

Searched

Serialized *X*

Indexed

Filed *X*

1 - 173-NEW

1 - 173-1416

1 - 157-11232

1 - 173-419

Approved

[Signature]

(4)

Sent

M

Per

Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
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(Priority)

PAGE TWO

GILLESPIE ADVISED FIRE POSSIBLY RESULTS OF ACTS OF NEGRO YOUTHS IN TCHULA AREA AS BLACK COMMUNITY RESENTED MOVE FROM CAPTIONED SCHOOL. SCHOOL IS LOCATED IN A PREDOMINATELY WHITE AREA OF TCHULA.

MISS. STATE DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL E. W. PATRIDGE CONDUCTING INVESTIGATION AT SCENE THIS DATE AND HAS RAGS AND A FIVE GALLON METAL CONTAINER OF POSSIBLE EVIDENTIARY VALUE FOR SUBMISSION TO THE MISS. STATE LAB FOR EXAMINATION.

HOLMES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MISS. HIGHWAY SAFETY PATROL, AND FBI PRESENT AT SCENE.

NO SUSPECTS DEVELOPED TO DATE. GYM AND AGRUCULTURE BUILDING WERE OF BRICK CONSTRUCTION. GYM WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED AND ONLY MINOR DAMAGE RESUTED TO AGRICULTURE BUILDING WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY SEVENTYFIVE FEET SOUTH OF THE GYM. PHOTOS TAKEN.

PATRIDGE ADVISED THAT METAL CAN AND RAGS FOUND AT SCENE WERE POSSIBLY USED AS FIRE BOMB.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

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(Type in plaintext or code)Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority)

PAGE THREE

TCHULA, MISS. POPULATION IS APPROXIMATELY SEVENTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY PERSONS OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY SEVENTYFIVE PERCENT IS BLACK AND LOCATED IN THE MISS. DELTA. JACKSON DIVISION CONDUCTED INVESTIGATION IN CASE ENTITLED, "BURNING OF THE TCHULA NEGRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TCHULA (HOLMES COUNTY), MISS., AUGUST FIFTEEN, SIXTYNINE", BUREAU FILE ONE FIVE SEVEN DASH ONE FOUR SEVEN TWO SIX, AT WHICH TIME MEMORANDA WERE FORWARDED TO THE DEPT. CLASSROOM FACILITY WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN. INVESTIGATORS COULD NEVER DETERMINE THAT THIS FIRE WAS ARSON.

MRS. SUSIE B. PENNINGTON, PRINCIPAL, TCHULA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ADVISED THAT CAPTIONED SCHOOL WAS PERMANENTLY CLOSED ON DECEMBER TWENTYTHREE, SIXTYNINE.

JACKSON WILL CANVASS LOGICAL SOURCES AND INFORMANTS  
AND ~~THE FOLLOWING~~ *ham follows*. END.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge